

Voting by Mail

**Presidential Commission on Election
Administration Listening Session
August 6, 2013**

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Santa Cruz County Stats

More people voted by mail in Santa Cruz than those who voted at the polls for the first time in June 2008. Since May 2009, more voters have voted by mail than the polls. This is the trend statewide.

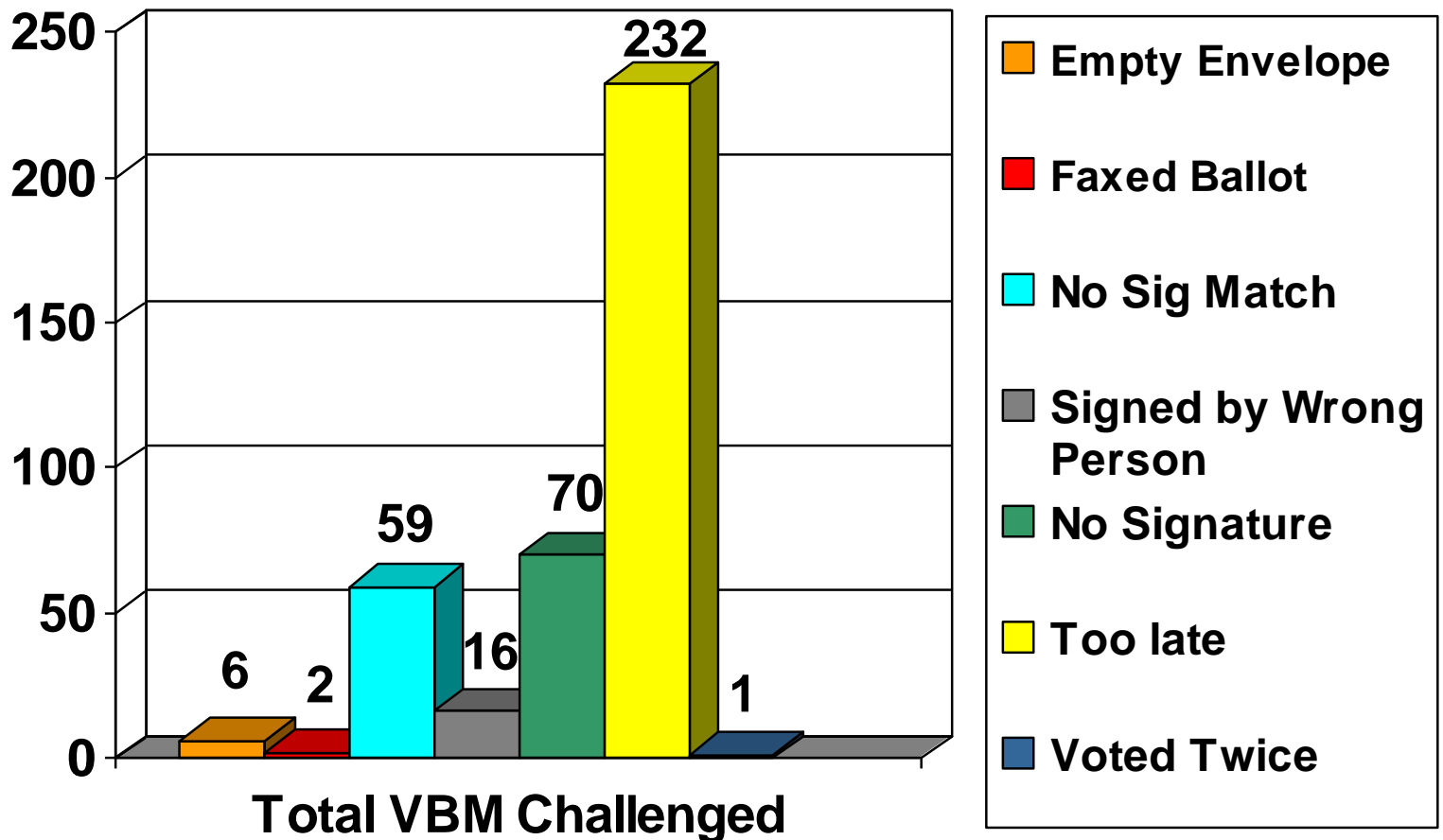
	ISSUED				RETURNED		FINAL ELECTION RESULTS				
Election	Perm VBM	Total VBM	Total Reg	% VBM	Voted VBM	% Voted	Voted @ Polls	Total Voters	%Voted Polls	% Voted VBM	Total Turnout
Nov-12	56,095	80,814	158,641	50.94%	64,372	79.65%	56,951	121,323	46.94%	53.06%	76.48%
Jun-12	52,817	64,708	146,936	44.04%	34,855	53.87%	23,671	58,526	40.45%	59.55%	39.83%
Nov-10	51,323	68,585	148,500	46.19%	50,401	73.49%	47,636	98,037	48.59%	51.41%	66.02%
Jun-10	51,752	59,778	146,821	40.71%	31,037	51.92%	24,047	55,084	43.66%	56.34%	37.52%
May-09	50,220	56,423	147,099	38.36%	29,357	52.03%	20,586	49,943	41.22%	58.78%	33.95%
Nov-08	44,810	68,763	148,361	46.35%	60,502	87.99%	68,053	128,555	52.94%	47.06%	86.65%
Jun-08	41,521	50,904	139,827	36.40%	29,519	57.99%	25,329	54,848	46.18%	53.82%	39.23%
Feb-08	39,619	52,198	136,144	38.34%	38,433	73.63%	52,700	91,133	57.83%	42.17%	66.94%

Challenged VBM Returns

November 2012 Election

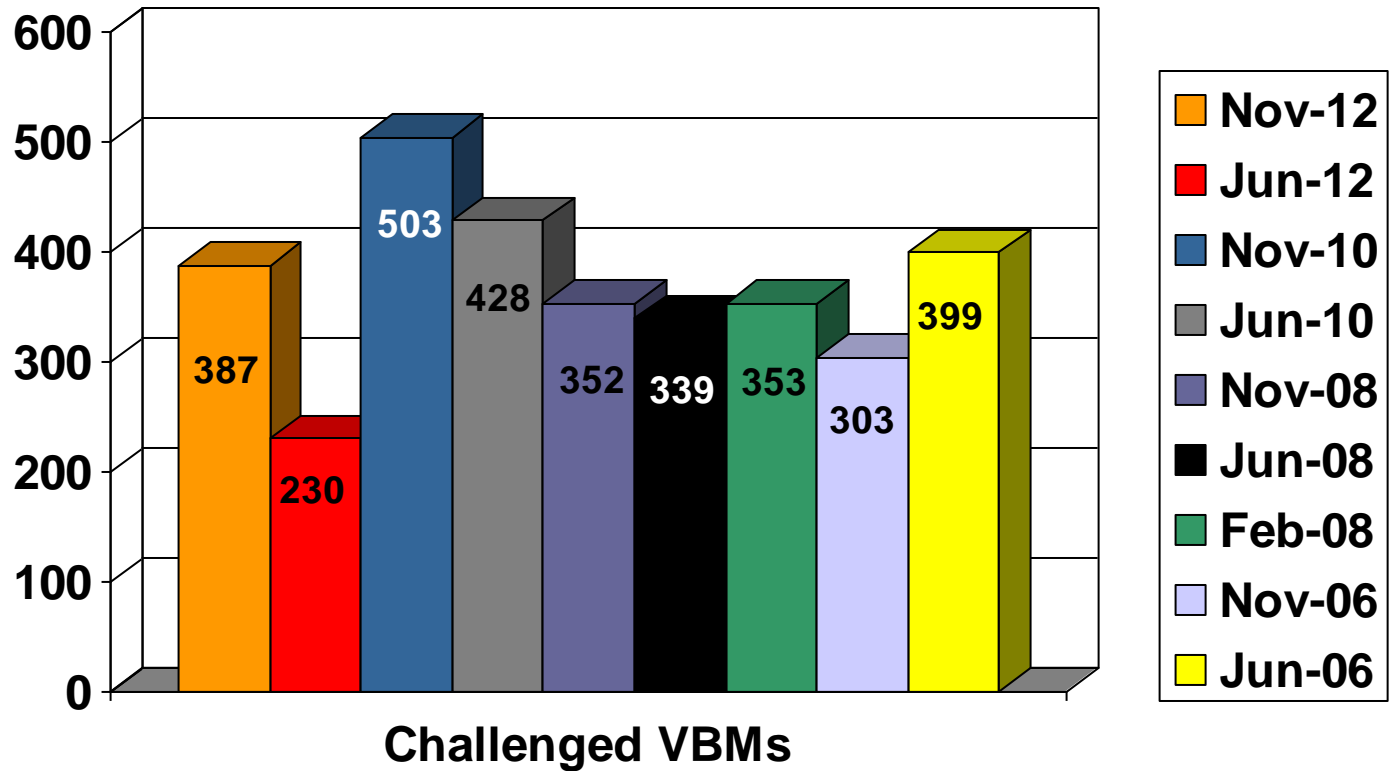
64,372 ballots returned

387 ballots challenged (.60%)



History of Challenged VBMs

Santa Cruz County





Best Practices

- SOS Uniform Vote Count Standards
- VBM materials in Plain Language
- VBM signature checking guidelines
- Automation of VBM processing
- Coordination with US Post Office



SOS Vote Count Standards

- What constitutes a vote?
- Votes corrected by a voter.
- Doodle bill (SB 183, 2011) — allows ballots to be remade and counted even if a voter signs or marks on the ballot. Since passage, voters seem to be using their ballots as a platform to sound off! As a result, more ballots have to be duplicated, costing our county more time and money. But, more ballots are being counted!



VBM Materials in Plain Language

- VBM insert instructions
- Instructions in the county Voter Information Pamphlet
- Envelopes – privacy flap over signature protects voter



VBM Signature Checking Guidelines

- Code says liberally construe in favor of the voter
- Looking for comparison – not an exact match
- Written guidelines for staff
- Supervisor reviews ALL “don’t counts”
- Great effort is made to contact voter who failed to sign or mommy signed!



Automate VBM Processing

- Counties are starting to purchase machines that can check signatures, sort VBM ballots into precincts, and open the envelopes to speed up processing of ballots.
- As counties see more than 50% of their voters voting by mail, this is an efficient alternative to manual processing.
- Santa Cruz County will implement new ballot sorter in 2014.
- Sacramento County and at least a dozen other counties already utilize automated VBM processing.



Going Postal

- In California in 2011, 3 processing-centers closed -- Salinas, Marysville and Oxnard
- USPS is now looking at closing 11 more centers in California.
- Impact from the 2011 closers -- the time it took to deliver outbound and receive inbound vote-by-mail ballots went from 1 to 3 days to 5 to 7 days.
- In Monterey County in November 2011, the delay meant that 234 ballots arrived too late. Yuba and Ventura counties had similar problems
- A closed Redding facility means ballots will travel 161 miles to West Sacramento before returning for delivery to the Shasta County elections office.
- North Coast ballots will go 190 miles to Medford, Oregon, after the Eureka facility closes.
- In the Central Valley, ballots cast in Bakersfield will be trucked 90 miles over the Grapevine to Santa Clarita, then back over the Grapevine to Kern County's elections office.
- In November 2012, approximately 4,500 of our VBM ballots were mislabeled by the post office in San Jose and sat in a cage in San Jose for at least a week until found and mailed. Our mail is mailed from the Santa Cruz post office, is then trucked to San Jose, and then trucked back to Santa Cruz for delivery.



Exact Postage Requirement

- New postal rule likely to be published in August will require election officials to print on the envelope or in an insert the EXACT amount of postage it will cost the voter to mail the ballot.
 - *Problems*
 - Not all ballots cost the same amount to return due to having one card or two or more cards.
 - The same ballot brought to two different post offices may require a different postage amount.
 - Postage increases are usually done in January which could impact election material printing deadlines.
 - Currently, there are three exemptions in the proposed rule—business reply, military, and overseas. NEED a 4th exemption for those who have postage due accounts for insufficient ballot postage – like Santa Cruz County!!



3-Day Reprieve

- SB 29 (Correa) – allows election officials to count VBM ballots cast by election day and received no later than the 3rd day after the election.
 - CACEO supports
 - If no postmark, voter must sign and date by EDay
- Stats from Santa Cruz County

Election	VBM too late	VBM received by E+3
Nov. 2008	276	190
Nov. 2010	371	260
Nov. 2012	232	99

● ● ● | What a great idea!



- What if the US Government paid for the postage on all vote-by-mail ballots returned by voters?